THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. III. October 22, 1937 Heshvan 18, 5698 No. 12.

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By Myer S. Kripke

RELIGION AND WORLD PEACE

By Eugene Kohn

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EDITORIALS

The Jewish National Fund

THE National Conference on Palestine Land Redemption, just completed in Detroit, marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Jewish National Fund. The Conference itself was a magnificent demonstration of support for the one Zionist institution on which all Zionist parties are united, and a vindication, if it were ever needed, of the fundamental soundness and rightness of the principles underlying the Jewish National Fund. The establishment of the J.N.F. was a stroke of genius, based as it is on age-old injunctions found in the Bible and yet in keeping with the first requirements of a modern socialized state.

To appreciate the true significance of the J.N.F., we must try to imagine what the Zionist movement and Palestine would be today without it, and to contemplate what future there would be for the proposed Jewish state without the lands redeemed and reclaimed with J.N.F. funds. Had the purchase of land been left solely in the hands of private capitalists, Jewish Palestine would be poorer by thousands of dunams of land. For private capitalists would never have purchased, even if they could have afforded to do so, the unwanted marshy stretches of land which were breeding places for swarms of malaria germs, and a danger to the life and health of those who settled upon them. Private capital would never have been able to plant forests, to make the arid places bloom, to drain swamps, to clear rocky and untenable land, to make possible the settling of tens of thousands of Jews in Moshavim and Moshavot, in Kvutzot and Kibbutzim, on soil belonging to all of the Jewish people.

The J.N.F. is the people's fund, the one fund which beyond anything else has made a reality of the Jewish homeland. For whatever happens to Palestine or in Palestine, the Jewish people knows that it has thousands of acres of land of its own for it to possess in perpetuity. Individual Jews may sell the land they purchase or barter it away, but the Jewish people through its J.N.F. will own its land for all time. A home built on land redeemed by the money of all the people, reclaimed with the sweat and blood and toil of its youthful pioneers, is truly a homeland. The more land thus redeemed and reclaimed and resettled the greater will be our homeland and the firmer the foundations of any future Jewish state.

The Detroit Conference set as quota for America for 1937-38 two million dollars, part of which is to be spent on redeeming an American region in the Lake

Huleh district in upper Galilee. Huleh gift bands are to be issued in acknowledgment of contributions of $3.50, $10, $18, and for larger amounts. There is no finer choice which could have been made at present of the land to be redeemed, and no worthier cause for which gifts can be made.

The J.N.F. has collected twenty-four million dollars in its 35 years of existence, six million of which were contributed by American Jewry. These twenty-four million dollars represent the gifts of millions of Jews in pennies, nickles, quarters, dollars, and larger sums. They include gifts given in hours of joy and in hours of sorrow, to commemorate every sort of occasion in an individual's and a people's life. More than mere money has gone into the making of the J.N.F. The memories and hopes and joys and sorrows of a people are bound up with the forests planted, the acres redeemed, the swamps reclaimed. There can be no better way to the redemption of the Jewish soul than through the redemption of the Jewish soil.

The Catholic Hierarchy in the Spanish Crisis

JEWS and Christians who are concerned for the prestige and welfare of the Church and Synagogue as institutions of religion have been profoundly shocked by the Pastoral Letter of recent date signed by many members of the Catholic hierarchy of Spain, including the Vatican's representative to the Insurgents. In modern times no Church body has been so derelict in its duty and so remiss in its obligations touching upon great ethical and religious problems as has the Roman Catholic Church. It never lifted its voice against the fascist conquest of Ethiopia when one word from the Vatican could have outlawed that war as a violation of the teachings of the "Prince of Peace."

When Father Coughlin, in this country, was spreading over the radio the virus of anti-Semitism and disguised Fascism, the Catholic hierarchy did not see fit to restrain him. And today, when the Spanish people, after centuries of spoliation and misrule by the landed gentry, spiritually aided and abetted by the Catholic hierarchy, is at last asserting its own power and authority, the Spanish prelates, contrary to the basic Catholic doctrine of obedience to established political authority, takes the side of the military rebellion against the legally and democratically elected popular government of Spain.

To the glory of Protestantism in this country let it be said that the Open Letter in reply to the Spanish hierarchy recently published and signed by 150 Protestant clergymen and educators is a vindication of the conscience of true religion and a severe indictment of the Catholic Church as a vested interest intent upon preserving its own political power and property in defiance of the popular will, and in violation of the Christian principles which it professes to preach and uphold.

When we consider the fact that the Spaniards in Loyalist as well as in Insurgent Spain are Catholic, and when we consider that fighting with Franco "for the things of God" and against "the anti-Christ" are African Moors, German pagan and anti-Catholic Nazis and Italian fascists, we cannot help but be impressed with the unfortunate trend manifesting itself in a great religious institution that speaks in the name of God.

We cannot believe that the rank and file among the Catholics in this country share the views of the Catholic prelates of Spain. Even the Catholic masses, as in Loyalist Spain, are beginning to differentiate between the large land-holding church organization and the teachings of the Catholic spiritual order.

If the American Catholic hierarchy should follow the anti-democratic policy of their Spanish confreres as expressed in this letter, it would justifiably forfeit the respect and fealty of an ever-increasing number of its communicants. Such a course of action is not inevitable, for it is

inconceivable that any institution in human life should be so rigid as to be unable to modify its committed stand.

We have already ample evidence in the Catholic workers movement and in the efforts to "modernize" Catholicism to conclude that a growing element in Catholic circles is intent upon reconstructing Catholicism.

If these forces of progress gain ascendancy, we may look forward to a contribution from the Catholic Church toward the establishment of an ethical and just society.

The Kashrut Problem Remains Unsolved

TWO weeks ago, five thousand kosher butcher shops went on strike, refusing to do any further business because the wholesale butchers were charging excessive prices and were substituting inferior grades for better ones. The strike was settled when the wholesale markets broke the price; but when the kosher shops reopened, the renewed demand for meat sent the prices up again. At the present writing, the shops have threatened again to go on strike.

The superficial investigation ascribed the excessive prices to the drought of last year. This does not explain, however, why the *trefe* butcher shops seem to be able to sell first class poultry and meat at extremely reasonable prices. Unfortunately, the kosher meat industry remains unredeemed from some of its basic evils, evils which have already driven many sensitive and honest young Jews away from the observance of the dietary laws, and which have led a special investigation in New York City to indict and procure the conviction of several vicious racketeers.

That the racketeers in the kosher poultry business, as in many other industries, were largely Jewish is an outrageous circumstance which should explode American Jewry out of its lethargy. It is a fact which we do not expatiate upon at this time because it involves a much more detailed treatment. It is a fact which indicts the whole structure of American Jewish life. What concerns us at this point is the bland indifference with which the so-called leaders of American Jewish life permit the entire institution of *kashrut* to remain in the hands of profit seeking individuals.

Almost two years ago, in our issue of December 27, 1935, we published an editorial entitled, "Wanted: A Consumers' Kashrut Cooperative." In that editorial we pointed out that this business involving $47,000,000 a year in New York City alone was yielding enormous profits which should be utilized for the advancement of Jewish religious and educational institutions. If Jews have to pay fabulous prices for the privilege of eating kosher meat, the difference in price between ordinary meat and kosher meat should, at least, constitute the Jews' contribution, in part, to the furtherance of their cultural life.

We appealed at that time for the establishment of a Cooperative, and turned to the United Synagogue of America and the Rabbinical Assembly for leadership in the enterprise. Nothing has been done. The question has never even been seriously considered. In the meantime, defection from *kashrut* goes on apace, the good name of the Jewish people is dragged through the mud every so often because of racketeering and price boosting, and permanent institutions continue to languish. We repeat here our suggestion for a Kashrut Cooperative, which "should make arrangements with a slaughter house to supply meat and poultry to satisfy the needs of the members. The Cooperative should be *non-profit-making;* whatever surplus remains from the sale of the commodity should go . . . to support . . . institutions decided upon by the Cooperative. The cost of the meat and poultry to the consumer would still be less than it is now because the profit item would be eliminated. If properly

administered, such a Cooperative could make of *kashrut* a real asset to Jewish life."

Will the American Jewish Congress take up the suggestion? Its leaders have time and again protested their desire to organize Jewish community life on a democratic basis and they need not commit themselves as a group to the practice of *kashrut* by organizing the practice on a decent basis for those who do wish to continue it. Will the Orthodox synagogues or rabbinate undertake the task? They certainly have a stake in the perpetuation of *kashrut*. Will Federation undertake it, as a first step in procuring at a low price kosher meat and poultry for their institutions that observe *kashrut?* Will the American Jewish Committee undertake it, in an effort to stamp out Jewish racketeering, and to restore good repute to the Jewish community? Will the Synagogue Council undertake it, since it is a religious matter common to the majority of its constituency? Will the Jewish Welfare Board undertake it as part of its program of community building?

Would all these organizations cooperate on the enterprise if it were initiated? Or will nothing be done, again, until the next scandal spreads the shame of this unsavory situation across the front pages of the press?

Solomon Schechter's Philosophy of Judaism

By Myer S. Kripke*

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH Solomon Schechter may be said to have been the founder and leading figure of Conservative Judaism in this country, he did not favor the term "Conservative Judaism" and resented its use. Accordingly, despite the fact that he is accepted as the authority of this group in American-Jewish life, this paper will not concern itself with the philosophy of the group, but will attempt only to formulate and appraise its position as stated by Schechter.

It must be stated at the very beginning that nowhere does Schechter make a complete and finished statement of his philosophy of Judaism. Indeed it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine from his writings his stand on many problems of primary importance. His attitude toward specific problems and Jewish life in general is found only in unconnected essays, and in solitary remarks made here and there in his writings. Though a few important snatches are found in *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology,* his opinions are obviously not to be sought in his scholarly works. To understand his attitude and his philosophy, one must rather go to his more popular works, collect his remarks relevant to a philosophy of Judaism, and organize them.

Schechter's opinions will be centered in this paper about the three focal points of Judaism: God, Torah, and Israel, or, to expand the meaning of the terms, the Jewish religion, the Jewish way of life, and the nationhood of the Jewish people. Schechter himself might not have made that division, since he looked upon Judaism chiefly as a religion. But since he recognized the nationhood of Israel and the existence of a unique Jewish civilization, it will be possible, and in the interests of clarity advisable, to make that division.

I. The Jewish Religion

To Solomon Schechter, Judaism was a religion:

> "Judaism cannot be dismissed with a few general meaningless phrases. Judaism is, as I have often insisted upon . . . a

*Rabbi, Racine, Wisconsin.

positive *religion,* with a Sacred Writ, and a continuous tradition."

"Judaism is a revealed *religion,* with sacred writings revealing the history of the past, making positive demands on the present, and holding out solemn promises for the future."

"I believe that Judaism is, in the first instance, a divine *religion,* not a mere complex of racial peculiarities and tribal customs. . . . Judaism is proselytizing *religion.*" *

In spite of this identification of Judaism with the religion of the Jewish people, which would seem to narrow its scope, Schechter assigns to Judaism a very broad scope by taking "religion" in a very broad sense:

"It permeates the whole of your life. It demands control over all your actions, and interferes even with your menu. It sanctifies the seasons, and regulates your history, both in the past and in the future."

Thus for Schechter, Judaism as a religion meant a great deal more than it does to the Reformists, for example. Indeed Schechter's statement that it "permeates the whole of your life" implies the same scope to religion that others would ascribe only to a culture or a civilization. Schechter himself uses the term "civilization (Kultur)" at one point, in referring to the life of Israel. It will be well, therefore, to deal first with those statements of Schechter that bear on religion as such, leaving for later discussion those remarks that bear on the Jewish way of life and the nationhood of Israel.

Schechter believed that it was the Jewish religion that made any practise, institution, belief, or teaching, Jewish. He condemned any attempt to remove the element of religion from Jewish life, and insisted that without religion there is no Judaism:

"The brutal Torah-less nationalism promulgated in certain quarters, would have been to the Rabbis just as hateful as the suicidal Torah-less universalism preached in other quarters. And if we could imagine Israel giving up its allegiance to God, its Torah, and its divine institutions, the Rabbis would be the first to sign its death-warrant as a nation."

At another point he says:

"I have no intention of here answering the question, What is Judaism? . . . But if there is anything sure, it is that the highest motives which worked through the history of Judaism are the strong belief in God and the unshaken confidence that at last this God, the God of Israel, will be the God of the whole world; or, in other words, Faith and Hope are the two most prominent characteristics of Judaism."

It is clear, then, from his own statement, that Schechter believed the religion of Israel to be by far the most important part of Jewish life. Any Jewish life that was non-religious, he would have held to be un-Jewish. Religion is the indispensable element without which Jewish life disappears.

It will be easier to understand what Schechter meant by this religion of Israel, if we group his views under three main headings: beliefs, ceremonials, and moral teachings.

A. *Beliefs*: Schechter was not much concerned with theological speculation, and spoke with satisfaction of the fact that in Judaism, theological speculation resulted not in "any imposing or universal doctrine, but usually in divers ceremonial practises." He was not even concerned with the problem of the nature of God. He was perfectly willing to accept the legalistic attitude, which he described as

". . . an attempt to live in accordance with the will of God, caring less for what God is than for what He wants us to be."

Nevertheless he held that the Jewish religion has always had certain dogmas as

*All quotations in this article are taken from the following works of Dr. Schechter:

Seminary Addresses and Other Papers, Cincinnati, Ark Publishing Company, 1915.
Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1909.
Studies in Judaism, First Series, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1896.
Studies in Judaism, Second Series, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1908.
Studies in Judaism, Third Series, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1924.

part of its very nature. A statement has been noted above in which he asserts the most important elements of Jewish belief to be the belief in God (which he nowhere defines) and the belief that this God will some day be the God of all the world. At other points in his writings he adds to the list of Judaism's beliefs the doctrines of Providence and Reward and Punishment. It is significant, however, that Schechter nowhere made clear what he meant by these doctrines or what he believed about them or what modern Jews can believe. He only defined these dogmas as they were believed by the Rabbis. His discussion of theology is confined to *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology.*

He held that it is necessary for a religion to have dogmas, for only a religion with dogmas can elicit sacrifice and loyalty from its members. These dogmas are the formulation of the will of God and His purpose, and through them religion becomes worth dying for. He makes it clear, however, that it is not the dogma as such which becomes worth living and dying for:

> "In speaking of dogmas it must be understood that Judaism does not ascribe to them any saving power. The belief in a dogma or a doctrine without abiding by its real or supposed consequences (e. g., the belief in *creatio ex nihilo* without keeping the Sabbath) is of no value. And the question about certain doctrines is not whether they possess or do not possess the desired charm against certain diseases of the soul, but whether they ought to be considered as characteristics of Judaism or not."

B. *Ceremonials*: These beliefs of the Jewish religion, Schechter held, became symbolized and crystallized into various *ceremonials.* He held that legalism really goes hand in hand with the higher ideals of religion. He illustrated the point by referring to the prophet Ezekiel:

> "Now two things are certain: first, that Ezekiel urges the necessity of the new heart as well as of individual responsibility more keenly than any of his predecessors; secondly, that in Ezekiel the legalistic tendency is more evident than in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. The logical conclusion would thus be that the higher ideals of religion are not only inconsistent with legalism, but are the very outcome of it. . . ."

Religious observance influences the entire life of the Jew.

> "It demands control over all your actions, and interferes even with your menu. It sanctifies the seasons, and regulates your history, both in the past and in the future."

Among these ceremonials he lists the Sabbath, the covenant of Abraham, and the dietary laws. Their importance for the Jewish religion, in Schechter's thought, is illustrated by his insistence that the Torah is the very life of Judaism, that "its abrogation means death." He held that the abolition of these ceremonials—included under the term, "the Law"—would be the end of the Jewish religion.

C. *Moral Teachings*: Schechter was thoroughly aware, however, of the fact that the ceremonial law was not the only part of Jewish "Law." He was careful to make clear that the *moral* precepts of the Jewish religion were of extreme importance:

> "A Jew who is most particular in the fulfillment of the ritual laws, but is less observant of the portions of the Torah commonly described as ethical and moral, is certanly a disturber of the peace of the King of Kings. . . . His offense is the greater as the discordant note will have a jarring effect on all the community, causing dismay and resentment in every quarter, for which all his coreligionists will be made to suffer."

Schechter does not discuss these moral duties of man in detail, but he makes his meaning clear by scattered statements which hold up as the ideal the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, "a form of government conducted on the principles of righteousness, holiness, justice, and charitableness." He envisaged the attainment of that Kingdom of God through "the worship of God by means of holiness both in thought and action." He maintained that the highest goal of any religion was the attainment of the Kingdom of God. He realized the necessity of developing religion away from

mere theological speculation and useless talk toward the real problems of men in their quest for a better society. He favored wise social legislation as a necessary cause in the abolition of suffering and poverty. He took cognizance of the fact that "a good dose of materialism is necessary for religion that we may not starve the world."

The Jewish religion, then, for Schechter consisted not only of beliefs or dogmas, but also of ceremonials designed to symbolize those beliefs and to effect proper moral conduct that would lead to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. At this point the question naturally arises, Why these particular beliefs and practises? What or whom are we to accept as the proper authority to determine which beliefs and which practises are Jewish? Which are worthy of following?

On the all-important question of revelation, which would answer this question, Schechter was silent. It is true that he did term Judaism a "revealed religion." But the use of the term "revealed" can hardly be taken in its literal sense in these passages. Indeed, in one of them, after saying that certain dogmas are necessary to Judaism as they are to all revealed religions, he goes on to say that these can hardly be said to constitute a creed; for a creed implies acceptance of beliefs on the weight of authority, not on the weight of man's own experience. But if these dogmas come to man through his own experience, it is obvious that they cannot be *revealed* in the ordinary meaning of the term. The impression given is then that Schechter did not take the doctrine of revelation literally. That impression is further strengthened in the reader's mind by the general tone of such essays as "The Study of the Bible." He held that scientific study of the Bible is not only permissible but eminently desirable as well:

> "And these sacred writings are the Bible, and they ought to be the possession of every Jew, interpreted and commented on in the Jewish spirit. I am in no way antagonistic to all that is modern. . .. I yield to no one in respect for such serious men as Dillman, Kuenen, and Delitzsch."

If, then, Schechter favored scientific study of the Bible, it is obvious that he could not have believed literally in revelation.

Instead of revelation, there is another authority to which Schechter appealed. This is the spirit of the people, the consensus of opinion, or, as Schechter called it in a term that became famous, the "conscience of Catholic Israel." He maintained that a belief or practise or ceremonial is Jewish if, and only if, it has become part of the Jewish spirit through continued usage and continued acceptance by the Jewish people through its long history. Judaism, he said, "has distinct precepts and usages and customs, consecrated by the consent of Catholic Israel through thousands of years." At another point he maintained:

> "There is no other Jewish religion but that taught by the Torah, confirmed by history and tradition, and sunk into the conscience of Catholic Israel."

As an example of how Schechter applied this principle, we have only to remember his remark on Reward and Punishment:

> "Whatever may have been the attitude of ancient Judaism towards this doctrine, there can be little doubt that belief in reward and punishment after death has been an essential dogma of the Synagogue for more than two thousand years."

Thus a dogma which may not at one period have been a part of ancient Judaism became a part of the religion in time, after it had come to be generally accepted among the people. It is the spirit of the people that determines the character of the beliefs and practises of the religion.

How we may determine the spirit of the people, the conscience of Catholic Israel, on any moot point, Schechter insisted could be accomplished in only one way: Study and learning, the cultivation of a science of Judaism, will enable us to understand what the Jewish attitude has been. He inveighed against the common fault of allowing rabbis to remain untrained in the Jewish field, unacquainted with Jewish history and literature. He insisted that even the Reformist Jews have

need of increased knowledge of Jewish life, so that they may know what is vital to Judaism and what may be changed with impunity . . . "and this knowledge can only be got from Jewish history and literature."

Knowledge of the people's past, then, said Schechter, will enable us to understand Catholic Israel's stand on a point, and the will of Catholic Israel is the final authority. The assignation of authority to Catholic Israel, Schechter would have defended on the grounds that the Jewish religion is a folk or national religion. He did not make this statement specifically. But it is the clear implication of a number of statements that bear on the relation of the Jewish religion to Jewish nationalism. Schechter believed that the two are inseparable:

> "We would have been spared all the terrible persecutions if we could ever have agreed to eliminate from it (the Jewish religion) the national features and become a mere religious sect."

Time and again he decried the teachings of those who aimed at a universal religion without Jewish national practises. He told his first graduating class at the Seminary that honesty and uprightness impose silence on them, should they ever reach the conclusion that they favor the absorption of Israel into a Universalism. He maintained that the abolition of the Law of Judaism—that is, its national as well as its religious practises—and the absorption of Israel as a nation, in favor of a universal religion, were contrary to the Bible, the Talmud, and all Jewish teaching. He insisted on the retention of Hebrew, the Jewish national language, as an indispensable part of the Jewish religion. It is obvious from these opinions of Schechter, that he believed the Jewish religion to be a folk-religion, national in character; and since this was so, it was always to the people, to the conscience of Catholic Israel, that one was to go to determine what might or might not be done, what might or might not be believed.

Despite his belief in the folk aspect of the Jewish religion, and despite his vehement protest against universalistic Judaism where Jewish practise would be abolished and the Torah abandoned, Schechter definitely did believe that Judaism should be and would be a universal religion. The distinction between his universalism and that of those against whom he inveighed, he stated succinctly: Universality means that "the whole world should become Jews, not that Judaism should fade out into the world." With that distinction in mind, Schechter was definitely in favor of a universal Judaism:

> "I think that even the most advanced Bible critic—provided he is not guided by some modern Aryan reasons—must perceive in such passages as, 'The Lord shall reign for ever and ever,' 'The Lord shall rejoice in his works,' and many others, a hope for more than the establishment of the national Deity among his votaries in Palestine."
>
> "Judaism means to convert the world. . . . It has confidence in the world; it hopes, it prays, and waits patiently for the great day when the world will be ripe for its acceptance."
> "Judaism can again become a factor in the conversion of the world."
>
> "Judaism is a proselytizing religion, having the mission to bring about God's kingdom on earth, and to include in that kingdom all mankind."
>
> "We may safely maintain that the kingdom of God, as taught by Judaism in one of its aspects, is universal in its aims."

Just as he felt no contradiction between his belief in the *national* character of the Jewish religion and its *universal* aspirations, so too did he feel no contradiction between his desire to keep the time-honored practises of the Jewish religion and his desire to accept the results of modern scholarship. Schechter believed that the Jewish religion was not a static thing, but a growing organism. In his own words:

> "Judaism was an organism with a natural growth, rooted in the Torah. . . . That certain foreign beliefs and foreign usages should creep in was unavoidable, as Israel neither could nor would shut itself off entirely from the influences of the outside world."

It was entirely in keeping with this con-

ception of a developing Jewish religion that he desired to

> "remain in touch with our present surroundings and modern thought, and to adopt what was the best in them, and, above all, to make use of modern method and system."

The Solomon Schechter who was such a leading figure in modern Jewish scholarship could not but have been eager to adopt the best that modern scientific investigation into religion had produced. Even in the interpretation of the Bible from a scientific point of view, which is the final test of the acceptance of the scientific spirit and method by a religious man, Schechter was no laggard.

Despite this acceptance of the scientific method, Schechter was unwilling to part with Jewish ceremonial practises. He asserted that the "institutions and observances of religion are part of its nature. He inveighed against what he called "spiritual amputations" on the part of Reformism, and maintained that they were "owing to insufficient acquaintance with the tenets of Judaism, its traditions, . . . and its aspirations." He recognized that in some countries of Europe the emancipation of the Jew was possible only through sacrifices of parts of the Jewish heritage. But he denied that this was so in America:

> "There is nothing in American citizenship which is incompatible with our observing the dietary laws, our sanctifying the Sabbath, our fixing a Mezuzah on our doorposts, our refraining from leavened bread on Passover, or our perpetuating any other law essential to the preservation of Judaism. . . . In this great, glorious and free country we Jews need not sacrifice a single iota of our Torah; and in the enjoyment of absolute equality with our fellow citizens we can live to carry out those ideals for which our ancestors had to die."

Just as he decried continued dropping off of what he considered essential elements of religion, so too did he disapprove of continued innovations, which he held must "in the end touch the very vital organism of Judaism." In short, he believed that though the Jewish religion was a developing organism, nevertheless nothing must be dropped off and nothing new taken on without the consent of Catholic Israel.

(To be concluded)

Religion and World Peace*

By Eugene Kohn

ALL the historic religions pay tribute to the ideal of world-peace. It would therefore be superfluous for me as a rabbi to attempt to support this statement by quotations from Biblical and rabbinic literature. The yearning for peace has ever been associated in the hearts of religious people with the divine purpose that ought to be embodied in human society. Nevertheless, whenever war breaks out, synagogues, churches and mosques echo war slogans. Cynics may be disposed to see in this phenomenon evidence of hypocrisy. But the religious men who are swept away by war hysteria are not hypocrites. They are convinced at the time that the victory of one side or the other in a particular war will contribute to the establishment of a more righteous social order such as is indispensable to the pacification of the world.

Nevertheless this phenomenon does show how ineffective religion has been in establishing world peace. Merely to convince people that they should love their neighbors as themselves will not prevent them from recourse to violence when they feel that an enemy is threatening the lives of those dear to them, or sacred institutions that are dearer to them than life itself. They do not necessarily hate the

*This paper was read at the Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Virginia, July 11, 1937.

enemy at all as individual human beings, but they regard the enemy as a menace which must be removed like a flood or a conflagration. People will readily give consent to the proposition that war is wicked but they will be honestly convinced—and their very detestation of war will add to their conviction—that the war was not of their choosing but was forced upon them. Wars seem to happen rather than to be made, and, when they happen, the noblest sentiment of loyalty to home and neighbors, and of reverence for national ideals and institutions will make an attitude of indifference to which side wins appear not as a manifestation of religious love but of callous insensitivity to all values except the desire for safety. In times of crisis, "Safety first" does not appeal as expressive of the highest idealism. Religionists are, therefore, prone to be strong national partisans in time of war and to condemn militarism in time of peace.

Obviously religious preaching and teaching are inadequate as methods of achieving peace. Political action looking toward the removal of the causes of war and pacific methods of resolving conflicting national interests are indispensable. But we must not, from the premise that religion by itself cannot bring peace, leap to the conclusion that religious effort in behalf of world peace must, of necessity, be futile. On the contrary, all other efforts at establishing peace must end in frustration unless backed up by religious faith.

To understand the role of religion in the movement for the abolition of war, we must have a clear conception of the role of religion in human life. Religion may be defined in many ways from different points of view. I should like to define it, for the purpose of our discussion, as man's reaction to the mystery of the universe. No matter how much our knowledge of the world grows, that mystery is never diminished, nor the need of our reacting to it. Science answers many questions, but it always raises more questions than it can answer. Technology solves many practical problems, but it creates many more that cry for solution. Growth of knowledge involves growth in the awareness of our ignorance, and growth in power involves increasing dependence on instruments and agencies outside of ourselves. The process of living therefore involves an orientation not merely to established fact but also to imaginative anticipations of life's possibilities. The sort of life that will prevail on earth is inevitably influenced not merely by our acquired knowledge, which makes us aware of the limits within which human achievement is possible, but equally by our hopes, yearnings and imaginative insights, which indicate the need and opportunity for creative achievement within these limits.

The gift of science to man is disillusionment. When we know that we cannot fly by a magic carpet no matter what incantations we utter, we cease to seek incantations. This puts us on the way to inventing the dirigible and the aeroplane, *provided we do not lose faith in the possibility of human flight.* Man cannot live on illusion, but neither can the human spirit halt at disillusionment; it must keep up its faith in the possibility of satisfying its deepest wants. Faith in God is the affirmation of our confidence that whatever ought to be can be, if we seek it in the right way. That quest is the service of God, and that right way is the law of God. The danger in modern man's preoccupation with science lies in his temptation to halt at the disillusioning phase of the process of enlightenment. The function of religion must be, not to preserve what has been proved illusory, but to accept disillusionment as a challenge to seek new methods of making reality conform to the ideal.

II

These thoughts suggest the role of religion in the peace movement. Science has disillusioned us as to the possibility of achieving peace by the mere spread of personal good-will. Biology has taught us that living organisms are all engaged in a

mutual struggle for a means of preserving their individual lives and the life of their kind. Anthropology and ethnology have shown that man is no exception to this rule and that human societies have always contended with one another for access to the natural resources on which their life depended. Psychology has shown that instincts with which men are endowed include tendencies to glorify the ego at the expense of other individuals and to compensate for personal frustration by identifying oneself with a group in the assertion of a collective egoism, so that even the altruistic sentiments of the individual have functioned to glorify the egoism of the group. Such facts as these help us to understand why mankind has not yet succeeded in abolishing war. This is science's gift of disillusionment to the seekers of peace.

But disillusionment need not mean despair and it is the task of religion to see that it shall not. Notwithstanding the failure of our civilization in the past to achieve peace, men of all nations have felt deeply the need for peace, have sensed the essential brotherhood of all men, have held the common interests of men as human beings to transcend the special interests of any particular section of humanity. This, too, is a fact that cannot be dismissed. The religious tradition of Judaism and its daughter religions, Christianity and Islam, has in the face of disillusionment after disillusionment affirmed the conviction that all men are brothers and have seen evidence of the unity of God in the spirit that seeks the unification of all mankind in a single human society. Whatever our growing knowledge has taught us of the causes of strife among men must influence the method by which we seek peace, but must not deter us from pursuing peace. Religion must overcome the defeatism which so often flows from disillusionment.

To do this religion must take full cognizance of the difficulties that confront mankind in the quest for peace. It must not cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. It must not place its reliance on prayer and ritual. It must not hug the illusion that men can fly on magic carpets if they utter the right words. I say this not to deprecate the value of prayer. There is no practice more potent than prayer to keep alive in the human soul, at one and the same time, the soul's protest against evils and its faith that these can yield before the spirit of God that is immanent in human society. But prayer as such takes no cognizance of the disillusionment that proceeds from a rational analysis of the causes of war. The main function of religion in the movement to abolish war must be to immunize men against the despair born of disillusionment and to expose the heresies to which it has given rise.

The recognition of the fact that life involves a struggle for existence in the course of which different social and national groups develop conflicting interests has led to the hasty conclusion that war is the only conceivable arbiter of these conflicts. Individuals, it is conceded, may act from altruistic motives but it is assumed that nations cannot be expected to show restraint in the pursuit of national objectives because these conflict with the rights of other nations. To expect that a powerful nation with a growing population shall refrain from conquest of a weaker nation is to expect the wolf to lie down with the lamb. Yet, from the days of Isaiah, this is exactly what religion did expect and demand of mankind in the organization of social life. And, although this goal has not been reached, it is dogmatism pure and simple to assume that groups of men are not capable of exercising self-restraint in the recognition of ethical rights. Self-sufficient, totalitarian nationalism is a modern heresy that utilizes the mood of disillusionment to rationalize an immoral and irresponsible exercise of power. It is a denial of monotheism and an atavistic reversion to the henotheistic worship of national deities. The very term "national sovereignty" should be repugnant to every man who takes seriously the religious doctrine of the sovereignty of God. For the

term implies that there is no loyalty which transcends loyalty to the nation. Its law is: "Right or wrong, my country."

Against this heresy religion must reaffirm its conviction that humanity is one and that its ultimate destiny toward which we must consistently strive is to be united in a single society cooperating for common ends. The failure of the League of Nations, upon which many of us had set our hopes, must not discourage us from renewed attempts to organize the collaboration of nations for the common welfare. The failure of the League does not prove that an organized human society cannot abolish war. The most that its failure proves is that the establishment of an international authority demands the development of a loyalty to humanity as a whole which transcends loyalty to any particular section of humanity. A league of sovereign nations is a contradiction in terms. The heresy of national sovereignty defeated the League. Religion must therefore fight that heresy and reaffirm faith in an integrated society of all mankind that shall express the sovereignty of God.

III

But the assertion of religious faith in the ideal of a united humanity demands to be supplemented by a faith in the importance of the human individual. One reason why people view with distrust the organization of a world state is the fact that its centralized authority will be more remote from the interests of the individuals governed and less responsive to their needs than even the sovereign national states as they exist at present. For the national culture which the state protects and glorifies enters into the very fabric of individual personality and makes the national state an object of reverence, but an international authority would lack this appeal to the loyalty of the individual. Unless the international government is subject to democratic controls it will not command the loyalty which alone can give it authority. Empires in the past, even such as conferred material benefits on their subjects, broke up because of their inability to interest their subjects in their defense and maintenance. Their authority was oppressive and tyrannical and not sanctioned by the consent of the governed. A similar world-state would be horrible to contemplate.

But the essence of democracy is respect for the individual human personality, and this respect can, in the last analysis, only rest on religious sentiment. The assumption that the right of the individual to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is, as Rousseau taught, a natural right, one that man actually enjoyed in a primitive existence before human conventions corrupted human nature is an exploded myth. This right can only be based on the belief that men *ought to be free* to live and pursue their happiness so long as they afford the same right to all others, that this is part of the essential meaning of human life, the divine destiny of man.

There is a discussion in the Talmud in which the rabbis seek to summarize in a single comprehensive statement the ethical teaching of the Torah. Rabbi Akiba finds it summarized in the words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," but Ben Azzai advances as a more comprehensive principle the words: "This is the book of the generations of Man: on the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God." For this verse affirms not only the common origin and unity of the human race, but the divine sanctity and inviolability of the human soul. The worth of the individual as a responsible moral agent in the achievement of a divine purpose that is dimly foreshadowed in our ethical impulses is implicit in the teachings of all the great modern religions about the soul. Political democracy has its ethical validation in the opportunity it affords to the individual to play a creative role in the shaping of human society.

From this it follows that even as religion must insist on loyalty to the interests of humanity as a whole, it must insist

no less on the freedom of the individual conscience in the service of humanity. The present conception of national sovereignty offends against religious ethics not merely by setting up the interests of the nation above those of mankind, but also by treating the individual as a mere pawn of the nation in the international scramble for power and prestige. To give to the state the power to compel its citizens to pillage, maim and murder in a cause to which they do not give moral assent is to violate the sanctity of the individual soul. Religion must affirm and seek to uphold with all the power at its command the right of the conscientious objector and must combat with vigor the conception of a totalitarian state. It must stand for a constitutional democracy that not only gives effect to the considered judgment of the majority but also protects the rights of minorities, even when the minority is but a single conscientious individual.

Out of the combination of faith in a united humanity and faith in the sanctity of the individual soul, arises a new conception of nationhood. Against the Spenglerian contention that nations exist only for purposes of defense and aggression against other nations, so that the highest expression of nationalism is warfare, ethical religion maintains a conception of nationhood in harmony with the verse in Proverbs (14:34): "Righteousness exalteth a nation and the disgrace of a nation is sin." From this point of view the function of the nation is to organize the collaboration of those whom history has bound by the consciousness of a common cultural heritage and the will to a shared destiny for advancing these common ends subject to their recognition of the rights of other nations to do the same. That the interests of nations frequently conflict need not be gainsaid. But this does not mean that such conflict represents their essential character any more than the fact that the interests of families frequently conflict would justify our asserting that mutual antagonism between families represents their essential function and reason for existence. Conflicts between nations may be inevitable, but it is not inevitable that these conflicts must be decided by the ordeal of war any more than it is inevitable that the conflicting interests of different families be decided by recourse to armed combat.

Religion must create a new type of patriotism, one that definitely repudiates the henotheistic worship of the national state which is fostered in fascist countries. It must denounce the doctrine that the national interests are the sole criteria for national policy, that governments have the divine right to command and compel, and citizens have the absolute obligation to obey regardless of the dictates of their conscience. From the point of view of this patriotism, the national hero would not be he who is most emphatic in asserting the national ego, but he who best expresses the national soul, the sense of the dignity of the nation as a collective personality with a creative and responsible part to play in the establishment of a better world in which all nations might share. If religion can inculcate patriotism of this order, there will issue a world-loyalty which will give to international instruments subject to democratic controls the power to compel nations to recognize one another's rights.

IV

We recently fought a war to make the world safe for democracy. We were disillusioned, for war inevitably breeds autocracy. Our present task is the reverse: religion must establish democracy in every sphere of life, political, social and economic, in order to make the world safe against war.

I have no illusions as to the ease with which war can be abolished. It may take generations; it may take centuries; it may take millennia. It will certainly require the martyrdom of countless individuals as its price. Nevertheless it must be put on the agenda of our day, for to regard it as impossible would be to admit defeat in all those human aspirations that spell for us the divine meaning of life.

We shall not live to see the establishment of God's kingdom of peace on earth, but we can experience God's kingdom within us and find life meaningful, purposeful and holy if we can contribute in some measure toward its achievement. There is a rabbinic homily which says that the Israelites, after having crossed the Red Sea, lost a great opportunity. They then declared: "The Lord will reign for ever and ever." But what they should have said was: "The Lord reigneth for ever and ever," for, had they done so, the redemption would immediately have ensued. We must not make the same mistake. Religion must not only teach men to look forward to an era "in the end of days," when "men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks," but religion must put the peace-movement inspired by the visions of the prophets of past ages on the agenda of our times. In this way it will, even in the present, redeem human life from pessimism, defeatism and a cynical acceptance of the code of the jungle.

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